

LETTERS

BRITISH MATRONS AT THE WAR OFFICE

(From our Special Correspondent)

DEAR EDITOR: You will be interested to hear that since I last wrote to you a deputation from the Matrons' Council has been received at the War Office by Lord Raglan, Under-Secretary of State for War, its object being to express the views of the council on the reforms necessary in the army nursing service.

The deputation consisted of Miss Isla Stewart, matron of St. Bartholomew's Hospital and president of the council; Mrs. Bedford Fenwick, president of the International Council of Nurses and superintendent of Nursing Department National Fund for Greek Wounded in the Græco-Turkish War; Miss Margaret Huxley, matron of Sir Patrick Dun's Hospital, Dublin, and president of the Dublin Nurses' Club, who came over from Ireland at a few hours' notice for the purpose and returned the same day; Miss Knight, matron of the General Hospital, Nottingham; Miss Mollett, matron of the Royal South Hants Hospital, Southampton, these three ladies being past or present vice-chairmen of the Matrons' Council and councillors of the International Council of Nurses; Miss Beatrice Jones, matron of the Victoria Park Hospital for Diseases of the Chest, who has worked in South Africa for six months during the present war as a member of the Army Nursing Reserve, and Miss M. Breay, honorary secretary of the council and councillor International Council of Nurses.

The deputation, which was courteously received by Lord Raglan, presented a memorandum, which was read by the president, embodying the following points:

"1. That in the last twenty years great progress has been made in nurse training, and the nurse of the present day must be a highly educated and skilful person if she is to render efficient service to physicians and surgeons and to the sick.

"2. That in all civil hospitals the nursing of male patients is entirely and most satisfactorily done by women, and there appears to be no valid reason why the sisters in military hospitals should not be responsible for the carrying out of medical directions in relation to the sick in every detail.

"3. That the control and discipline of the nursing staff in military hospitals should be vested in the superintendent of nursing.

"4. That a Nursing Department should be formed at the War Office in affiliation with the Medical Department, which should be superintended by a fully trained and experienced administrative nursing officer. (In this connection it was pointed out that a bill authorizing the appointment by the Secretary of War of a graduate nurse as Superintendent of the Army Nurse Corps has recently been passed by Congress in the United States.)

"5. That all female nursing officers should be certificated graduates of nursing schools of hospitals having a three-years' term of training and to which medical schools are attached. That in each military hospital the head sister should have full authority over the female nursing staff and be directly responsible to the Nursing Department for their discipline and efficiency. That there should be two grades of nursing sisters, senior and junior, and that the higher grade should be recruited from the lower, as vacancies occur, upon the recommendation of the principal medical officer and the head sister.

"6. That the probationary period for orderlies should last for three years, during which time they should have regular theoretical and practical instruction. That while in the wards they should be subject to the authority of the ward sisters, and that power of suspension for inefficiency or misconduct should be vested in the principal medical officer on the report of the head sister.

"7. That in the opinion of the Matrons' Council the organization of an effective army nursing reserve can only be satisfactory if kept up to a minimum standard in time of peace. That any such reserve should be an integral part of the army nursing service and under the control of the War Office both in time of peace and war, and that every element of lay control and philanthropy should be eliminated from its constitution."

These were the principal points embodied in the report, which was the outcome of much consideration and expert knowledge. For fourteen years Mrs. Bedford Fenwick has been interested in army nursing reform and has thoroughly acquainted herself with the conditions under which army nursing is at present performed. She has also had experience of active service as superintendent of the British contingent of nurses sent out to Greece by the National Fund during the Græco-Turkish War. The Matrons' Council had, further, the benefit of the diary of an army sister who nursed in our army for ten years in various parts of the world, and of the advice of several experienced nurses who have worked in South Africa during the present war.

BRITISH DELEGATES TO THE NURSES' CONGRESS

It may interest your readers to know that at the quarterly meeting of the Matrons' Council Miss Mollett, matron of the Royal South Hants Hospital and a vice-chairman, was elected delegate to the Buffalo Congress by an overwhelming majority, a choice which I feel sure will commend itself to your committee, as Miss Mollett's charming personality makes her deservedly popular. The Registered Nurses' Society has unanimously elected as its delegate its secretary, Miss Sophia Cartwright, who is a graduate of St. Bartholomew's Hospital and a lady who may always be relied upon to act and vote straight where nursing interests are concerned.

The Congress is arousing much interest in this country, and all that is brightest and best in the nursing profession here would be with you on that occasion if means permitted.

Yours cordially,

UNION JACK.

[We congratulate the "British Matrons" upon their courageous and womanly invasion of the War Office. Whether their recommendations are accepted or not, they must go on record in history, and commend themselves to all reasonable-minded people as being practical, humane, and enlightened. We believe their suggestions will not be without effect, and that the War Office, while at present turning them down, may, later on, adopt them as its own device. Have we not all known this to happen more than once? We do not mean only in war, but in all kinds of affairs. There are critics who would seem almost to prefer having abuses continue than to have reforms suggested by women, and articles have appeared in the English press, directed against the "British Matrons," the tone of which is quite incomprehensible to us, who see in their action only timely professional intelligence and high moral courage.—Ed.]

THE AMERICAN MISSION HOSPITAL IN EGYPT

WE misspelled the name of our correspondent from Assiout, Egypt. It is Miss E. Dorcas Teas, and she writes that she graduated from a Philadelphia hospital. A graduate of the New Haven School conducts the hospital in the Training-College for boys at Assiout. Miss Teas asks for suggestions about plumbing in places where there can be no real drainage, and plans for making distilled water, both for their new buildings. Can any one give her practical suggestions?

FROM NEW YORK TO MANILA**FIRST RESERVE HOSPITAL, MANILA.**

. . . We left New York on the United States army transport Kilpatrick, carrying one thousand enlisted men. Newly fitted up, it had a complete little hospital, with a special diet-kitchen for the patients. We had pleasant weather, and reaching Gibraltar, I took a patient to the English military hospital. The ambulance was a primitive-looking affair with two wheels and without springs. As the roads were very good it was not so uncomfortable as it seemed. . . . I visited the Colonial Hospital and was shown through it by the sisters. They wear blue gingham dresses, white linen aprons, cuffs and kerchiefs, and white caps with strings tied under the chin. The wards contained twenty beds each, and opened out on balconies where the convalescents sat, with a fine view of the ocean and the fort. The windows and halls were filled with beautiful tropical plants, which relieved the plain whitewashed walls and unpolished floors. We then took a drive around the fort. The heights were rather trying, though the scenery was magnificent. The walls along the roadside were covered with a luxuriant growth of heliotrope. . . . An English fleet lay in the harbor, and it was a pretty sight to see the launches come over the water, carrying the English officers who came aboard to pay their compliments to our commanding officers.

We left just before the firing of the sunset gun, and our next stop was in Malta Harbor. The city was a beautiful sight, majestic in the splendor of ancient Spain; of Moorish architecture, and looking, from the harbor, as if it were cut out of the solid rock. I went ashore and visited the Church of St. John to see the tombs of the Knights of Malta; four hundred and sixty of them lie there, overlaid with mosaic. I also saw interesting old paintings and sculpture, and the beautiful gardens, covering an area of several miles.

We next cast anchor at Port Said. Here the East and West meet, and everything has a foreign appearance. The streets are narrow and unpaved, and anything like a sanitary condition is unknown. Beggars almost take possession of one, and will produce any relic of the Holy Land for a small sum. We were two days here, and fifteen hours in the Suez Canal. One side is fertile, the other a desert. We were told that for every foot of it a man was buried while it was being dug.

After a long sail we saw the island of Ceylon. How beautiful it looked in the purple haze of the sunset! And the odor of the spices came to us on the breeze. We were two days at Colombo. . . . We anchored at Singapore, but were only in harbor three hours, as the city was quarantined.

Finally, late one afternoon we saw the mountains of Luzon, and in the

evening anchored in Manila Bay. It is one of the finest harbors in the world, thirty miles in extent each way; the land is high and covered with luxuriant vegetation. Manila is about twenty miles from the entrance to the harbor. It is a fortified city encircled by a wall, with bastions and bulwarks, ditch and outer ditch, into which the water may pass through sluices, thus isolating the city.

The First Reserve Hospital fronts on the Pasig River. The nurses' uniform is white with white canvas shoes. Day nurses report for duty at seven A.M. and are off at six-thirty P.M., with two hours off in the middle of the day. Night nurses are on from six-thirty to seven. The wards have about sixty-four beds each. They are built of stone and finished with hard wood, lighted with electricity, and the sanitary arrangements are fairly good. The days of hardships are now over, and everything is nicely arranged for us.

M. E. SILCOTT.

[Miss Silcott is a graduate of the Children's Hospital, Washington, D. C.]

